WHAT AFTER SECULARISM?

By

Mazharuddin Siddiqui

PREFACE

Most people, who believe in God, seldom take the trouble to study the practical implications of their belief. The doctrine of one God, Creator of all existence, has ceased to influence the conduct of man to any appreciable degree, specially in the sphere of collective life. Politicians who are ardent worshippers of the deity and those who are equally ardent in their atheism, easily get on together in the shaping of human destiny and collective affairs, their respective ideas as to the desirable type of human existence and conduct being almost identical. Religion and God have thus lost all meaning for practical life and collective affairs, having been relegated to the region of pure metaphysics. This departmentalisation of belief and conduct and their complete separation results from an utter disregard of the duty of practical obedience to the Creator. We seem to have taken for granted that God requires from us merely a theoretical recognition of His sovereign whom we may chose for ourselves and do his bidding in collective affairs. These misconceptions about God have done great harm. They have indeed destroyed religion. The aim of this small brochure is to present the true conception of God and its practical requirements.

Mazharuddin Siddiqui
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WHAT AFTER SECULARISM?

After an interval of nearly six years, world peace has been restored to all appearance, though hatred, jealousy and mutual distrust still poison the air and may, at any time, give rise to yet another conflagration. During this period the world has experienced one of those great convulsions of history which mark the end of an epoch and the beginning of a fresh phase in human affairs. The past six years have been eventful to a degree seldom equalled in the annals of civilization. Empires rose and fell. Nations that seemed to have reached the summit of material progress and economic prosperity were swept out of effective existence by a hurricane of fire and sword that left nothing of their former glory. Countries which had blossomed forth into smiling lands of plenty were devastated from one end to another and turned into empty deserts. The cataclysm that overwhelmed the world and turned it upside down has at last subsided and a merciful Providence has vouchsafed to His creatures, after an agony that seemed unending, the blessings of peace. Let us turn to Him, then, in all humility and thankfulness that He saved humanity from further destruction. But our thankfulness would be very unreal if we did not read the signs in which He manifested Himself in the dreadful days just gone by. Let us pause and reflect on the cause that plunged mankind into a war of such global dimensions, so that

we may avoid the recurrence of the scourge from which humanity has just been delivered.

This war has shown conclusively that western civilization which rests on a purely material basis and which was permitted from the outset by a spirit of godlessness has exhausted its utility through failure to satisfy the spiritual and material needs of mankind. In its earlier phases it did real service by releasing human intellect from theological dogmas which enmeshed it. It knocked the bottom out of those superstitions and accretions which religion had become overloaded. But in demolishing theology, it destroyed the very substance of religion; in fighting superstition it crushed belief. Faith in the spirituals basis of life was shaken by the progress of physical sciences, and a purely materialistic view of life took possession of the common mind leaving the soul of man vulnerable to all sorts of political and economic dogmas, dressed up as enlightened theories to reform an ailing world. That is not to say that religion was not permitted a sphere of its own. On the other hand, freedom of worship, freedom of belief and freedom of conscience were established on a secure basis and the churches were allowed, within their limits to carry on their work. What we maintain is that religion ceased to be a live force in the affairs of the world. Every care was taken to render it ineffective and reduce it to a life-less appendage in the total personality of man. The relationships of men were no longer to be governed by their spiritual faith. The realms of politics, economics and social conduct, were declared prohibited areas, within which religious belief could not enter. What was left of religion, then, except the privacy of one's heart? Man could believe in god, but he was not

allowed to mould his actions in accordance with that belief, for action is outward-directed. To act is to enter into relation with other individuals, and this was a sphere closed to religion which was consequently divested of its primary function, namely the improvement of human relationships. From the sphere of practice and ethical conduct, it was relegated to the region of pure metaphysics. The conclusion is inescapable; that it was not religious belief which was tolerated but opinion, for belief must issue in practical conduct involving other personalities. In other words religion was permitted a certain measure of freedom so long as it confined itself to the purely intellectual region and was held as an opinion not to be put to the hazard of action. God was to be accepted by those who did accept Him, but He was not to be obeyed. The idea of God as the Creator remained, but of God as the Law-giver, the Nourisher the Sustainer, the Guide, the object of man's primary allegiance and the authority to be obeyed above all others, was laid aside and frowned upon. Men were ready to believe in God, but they would not tolerate His guidance or interference in their daily practical conduct. It was an impotent God they wanted, not the Almighty one with a claim on their obedience.

As a result, the social and political life of man was completely secularised and expediency became the sole basis of morality. The state, freed from allegiance to the divine authority, and therefore, from obedience to the law of righteousness, became a law unto itself, obeying no higher principle than its own capricious will. The modern secular state thus rests on the denial of God, not of course, on the denial of His existence but of His sovereignty, of His exclusive title to the

obedience of His creatures. The state, not God, became the source of moral law and arrogate to itself the divine attributes of omnipotence and sovereignty, that is, the right of to the undivided and absolute obedience of the subjects, But since sovereignty and omnipotence can belong to one only, this self constituted sovereign, the secular state, found its claims challenged by like entities in the form of other states and a clash between the false pretenders became inevitable. Moreover, the state, being after all, no more than the expression of the united will of a group of human beings and lacking the attributes of justice and infallibility so essential to a true sovereign, soon proved incapable of carrying out its responsibilities. It could neither establish the reign of justice within its own borders in relation to the various classes of its subjects nor act justly towards peoples outside its domains. Wars and bloodshed followed as a necessary consequence, and the earth was filled with tyranny and injustice on a scale hitherto unknown.

The root of all the troubles which have distracted the world, lies, therefore, in our misconception about God and His attributes and in our ignorance of our real destiny as human beings. Unless these misconceptions are removed and the idea of God is set forth in its fullness, unfolding before us the scroll of final human destiny, there will be no escape form the bewildering mazes, into which mankind has blundered and still keeps blundering. It is for this reason that we recommend the Quran to the reader, for it is the only Book, among the religious scriptures of the world, which gives us the truest, fullest and the most elaborate description of the being and attributes of God in relation to His creatures.

According to the Quran, God is not merely the Creator of the world but also it's Sustainer. Nourisher and its Guide, all things, living and non-living are continuously dependent on Him for their existence as well as for the fulfilment of their destiny. It is indispensable, therefore, for the realisation of human self and its healthy development that man should seek to attain a satisfactory relation with Him. As for the Creator Himself, He maintains a living connection with His creatures and manifests Himself to them in innumerable signs. But it is not a one sided relation that exists between man and his Creator, in the sense that the Creator must of necessity bestow His favours on man, whether or not he accepts and obeys the Creator. He is not bound by any such necessity. Only such among mankind deserve and receive His grace, who seek His pleasure, walk warily on the road towards Him, trying to read and understands His signs, who always look to Him for guidance as it reveals itself in nature and in the mind of man (through His prophets) and, who endeavour day and night to strengthen their relations with Him. As for others who turn away from Him and, instead of obeying Him, give their primary allegiance to human authorities, who depend for guidance on their own unaided reason or on the wisdom of their leaders and legislative bodies, who never seek to rivet the chains of friendship with the Creator, they always fall into error and ultimately meet with the punishment due to them, however much they may seem to prosper in the early stages of their disobedience.

God is also the Beginning and the End in the sense that He is the primary cause of creation as well as the final end towards which all things move:-

> "He is the First and Last and the Outward and the Inward; and He knows of all things." (Qur'an-57:3)

> "And towards God all things are brought back." (Qur'an-2:210)

As He is also eternal, man partakes of His eternity, moving not towards nothingness as the materialists imagine, but towards a second and more enduring existence. Here also necessity does not blind God. Though all thing return to Him, they do not return in the same state. The virtuous and the wicked are both coeternal with God but the state of their eternity differs, the eternity of the former being a state of blessedness in proportion to their godliness, the eternity of the latter being a state of perdition according to the degree of their ungodliness. The nearer a man draws to God and the more closely he approximates himself to the Creator by obeying Him, following His guidance and shaping his individual and collective life in accordance with His will, the greater is the state of his perfection and the higher the degree of blessedness which logically results from the perfection. On the other hand, if a man is farther away from God, having enhanced his unlikeness to the Creator, by denying Him in thought and deed, by obeying authorities other than Him and seeking their pleasure instead of His, the greater is the state of his imperfection and the higher the degree of unhappiness inevitably attendant upon imperfection. Both punishment and reward follow naturally from the character and personality that one builds up for oneself

through the course of life. They are not imposed from without.

> "Whose doth right, it is for his soul, and whose doth wrong, it is against it." (Qur'an-45:15)

The conception of god as merely the Creator and the First cause is inadequate and dangerous. It leads easily to the false assumption that His connection with man ended with the act of creation and that He has played out His role in the evolution of life. God is not only the cause of creation, but its end too, His connection with the world and His creatures is, therefore, everlasting, but that connection may be either positive or negative, if a man accepts and obeys Him, He becomes related to him as a friend, guide, and helper.

> "God is the Protecting friend of those who believe. He bringeth them out of darkness into light."
>
> (Qur'an-11-257)

On the other hand, denial, disobedience and failure to accept His guidance even when it has been made manifest, establishes a reverse relation with God. Man becomes the object of His displeasure. Since God is the final, towards which all things move, our dependence upon Him is complete and escape from Him is impossible, for, whether we will or not, our destiny lies with Him and in Him. It could not be otherwise, considering that He it is who created us, fashioned us in the womb and gave us direction, and none exists other than Him to whom we would ally ourselves or look for the fulfilment of our destiny. But here again we must be warned against the philosophical conception of the end, which does not apply to God. Plato thought of God as a magnet, which

itself unmoved, draws all things towards it. It is not in this sense that God is the final end of existence, for He is not unmoved but responsive to human needs and desires. The more we believe in Him and show ourselves conformable to His will and its direction, the nearer He moves towards us. But if we turn away from Him and disobey His commands in spite of our professed belief in him, He too draws Himself apart from us. The initiative thus rests with man whether he would move towards God or away from Him. If man, either individually or collectively, remains indifferent to the will and purposes of his Creator, and chooses to act indepently of that will, he places himself against the Creator's designs and becomes that object of divine displeasure, the consequences of which are ultimately fatal to his well-being, though immediately no harm may ensure. It is therefore the height of unreason and sheer effrontery on the part of any people or nation to suppose, as some modern nations have supposed, that in fighting for its own existence or for the freedom of its allies, it is carrying out a divine mission or fulfilling a divine purpose. It is only when a people has accepted God as sovereign and based all its laws, habits and customs on His commands, when it has shown itself obedient to Him and His prophets, that it can lay claim to such a position. But if a people rears its political edifice on the notion of people's sovereignty or the sovereignty of kings and dictator, accepts any law made by the majority of its chosen representatives, irrespective of whether that law is contrary to divine injunctions or in accord with them, believes in the power of unaided reason to solve its problems, derides revelation and denies its utility in political and economic life, it has no title whatsoever

to divine favours, however, great the number of mosques and churches it may have built and however deep its respect may be for the ceremonial aspect of religion. Such a community of men, be it Muslim or Christian in name and by birth or association, is really a community of disbelievers, rebellious to God and His prophets.

It could not be otherwise; for justice is an essential attribute of God. Because He is just, He cannot remain indifferent towards good and evil or bestow His favours equally on those are obedient and loyal to Him and on others who disobey and rebel against Him. It would be a very unjust God who treated all His creatures alike, irrespective of their attitude towards Him. Under such a dispensation no particular motive would remain for loyal, obedient and virtuous conduct. Therefore, though all human beings are His creatures, and He sustains, nourishes and providers for them all equally, His favours are reserved only for those who show themselves obedient to Him. It is towards this attribute of justice that the Quran has drawn attention in the following verse:-

> "Or do those who commit ill-deeds suppose that We shall make them as those who do good works, the same in life and death? Bad is their judgement."
>
> (Qur'an-45:21)

You do not expect a good government to treat all its subjects alike, whether they observe the laws of the state or habitually disobey them, whether their attitude is one of loyalty or insurgence, whether they rob, loot and murder or uphold the authority of law. A Government must, in the interest of the people themselves and of their moral education, behave

towards its subject differently according to the degree of their loyalty and disloyalty and bestow its favours and rewards only on those whose conduct has been law-abiding. Of course, a state is blameworthy if it takes no steps to educate its subjects in the principles underlying its policy or fails to place before them in clear and unambiguous terms the basic structure of law from which all its legal enactments derive their sanction. In the measure that it does this; the justice of its conduct becomes questionable and its rewards and penalties suffer from lack of system and principle.

The justice of the Creator is not marred by any of those blemishes, for He has taken good care to make it clear to His creatures what it is that He expects of them by way of submission and obedience. The moral and spiritual form which should guide the conduct of human beings and the social laws which ought to constitute the foundation of human society have been set out by Him in the plainest manner. The guidance He thus offers mankind through His prophets is complete. It would have been a grave act of injustice on His part if He had claimed obedience form mankind without fully revealing to them what that obedience meant in its practical details. Is it possible for any man to obey an authority, whatever be its nature, if it keeps mum, issues no commands and gives no directions?

Here comes in the rationalist, who believing, if he believes at all, in the existence of the divine Being, denies the necessity of divine guidance and scoffs at the mere mention of revelation, His argument rests on the supposed power of unaided reason to discover the law of morality and furnish the clue to human salvation. The rationalist depends on the inward promptings of our nature to reveal the true ends of

human endeavour and on the enlightenment of reason to provide correctives to any aberration which might result from obeying the natural instincts.

This confidence in man's reason and in the reliability of nature's guidance was born in an age when the progress of physical sciences seemed to promise and era of unlimited material abundance, but its falsity has been nowhere more strikingly demonstrated than in the world war, of which we have just seen the end. Neither the natural fellow-feeling of men, nor the developed intelligence of civilised nations could keep them from embarking on a course of mutual extermination which has very nearly destroyed the fabric of western civilisation. Again and again it has been proved by the course of events that human intelligence is always clouded by the mists of desire and passion and, that man is unable to see beforehand the wider consequences of his own action,. The urgency of human desires dims the faint perceptions of reason and deflects it from the straight course. This is true not only of natters which touch us deeply and arouse our innate prejudices. Even in the purely intellectual region our unconscious experiences pre-formed ideas and temperamental leanings determine our opinions and affect our judgement of things. Here is an interesting passage from Bernard Shaw which shows the measure of our helplessness in this respect—"There is no harder scientific fact in the world than the fact that belief can be produced in practically unlimited quantity and intensity, without observation or reasoning, and even in defiance of both, by the simple desire to believe founded on a strong interest in believing. Everybody recognises this in the case of amatory infatuations of the adolescents who

see angels and heroes in obviously (to others) common-place and even objectionable youths and maidens. But it holds good over the entire field of human activity. The hardest-headed materialist will become a consulter of table-rappers and slate-writers, if he loses a child or a wife so beloved that the desire to revive and communicate becomes irresistible. The cobbler believes that there is nothing like leather. The imperialist who regards the conquest of England by a foreign power as the worst of political misfortunes believes that the conquest of foreign power by England would be a boon to the conquered" (The Doctor's Dilemma)

It is, therefore, clear that the laws and institutions of a people, however advanced in civilisation, are not the product of rational thought. Tradition, temperament and desire, founded on individual and group interests, creep in and imperceptibly affect the judgment and, therefore, the decisions of statesmen and legislators, even when they appear to be most reflective in deliberation, the rationalist is at least as much the slave of his desires and feelings as the dogmatic theologian. Why then the modern prejudice against revelation as something irrational? The reason lies in a misunderstanding of the true import of revelation which is considered to be beyond the range of human intellect.

If we analyse religious revelation into its components, we shall discover that it consists invariably of two elements. Firstly it states certain fundamental doctrines about the existence and attributes of God, the conception of an after-life, the creation of world and matters connected therewith. Secondly, it sets forth a code of practical conduct

based on these doctrines, It is the former aspect of religious revelation which is usually attacked on the ground of irrationality. The other element in religious revelation dealing with practical human conduct can always be judged from the stand-point of social utility, and therefore, belongs to a realm to which rational standards are applicable. On the other hand, problems such as the existence of God or of the life hereafter are by their very nature incapable of scientific proof, since they do not come within the purview of human experience and observation. It is easy, therefore, to dub them as irrational. But those who prefer this charge against revelation are not clear in their own minds as to what they mean by rationality. If rationality means that one should not believe in doctrines which are incapable of experimental verification, there is an equal force in the argument that from a purely rational point of view, a doctrine should not be rejected or a truth denied, unless it contradicts our experience and observation. Now, as Kant has shown, if you cannot prove the existence of God or of the life hereafter and other like doctrines by experiments and observation, you cannot also disprove them by any method known to science. On purely rational grounds, therefore, the denial of these truths is at least as unscientific as their acceptance. The only logical course then is to take refuge in scepticism. But the sceptic's attitude is impossible to maintain in practice. As soon as you enter the realm of practical conduct, your behaviour is either based on the presumption that God and the other world exist or you conduct yourselves as if they do not exist. No third alternative is possible. The sceptic stands, in so far as practical conduct is concerned. On par with the disbeliever. The supernatural truths

embodied in revelation cannot be dismissed, therefore, as irrational. Because they are above reason, they are not necessarily against reason. The complex machinery of a railway engine is utterly incomprehensible to an ordinary man. Its operations baffle his understanding and yet he believes in the driving power of the engine because of the solid results before him. He cannot deny its utility on the score of unintelligibility. All men, geniuses included, have to take certain things on faith; they cannot go on doubting everything or address themselves to the impossible task of enquiring or address themselves to the impossible task of enquiring into their operations. Were they to do this, life would become impossible, But in so doing they are not acting irrationally for they take a thing on faith only when they have examined its practical effects. I believe in the power of electricity to illuminate my room, not because all the complex processes involved therein are clear to my understanding. In truth they are as incomprehensible to me as the theory of relativity is to a beginner in physics. But I do believe in electricity because I see its effects. The supernatural or rather the super-rational part of revelation is, therefore, to be judged not on its own account but on the basis of the practical results it yields, by the outlook which it seeks to create, by the conduct to which it leads by the character it moulds and the set of legal and moral precepts which rise on its foundation. It is thus the practical and not the metaphysical aspect of religious revelation which is the proper object of rational enquiry and it is from this aspect that revelation should be approved.

Another common misunderstanding about religious revelation is that it is hostile to the exercise

of reason in the affairs of life. Nothing could be farther from truth. The divine revelation comes not to replace reason, but to supplement it, correct it and keep it on the rails. It does not abrogate reason; it shows the direction which reason should follow. If a human authority gives commands or issues directions to a subordinate, does it mean that the latter should suspend his judgment, shut his eyes and suppress his intellectual faculties? Rather, the giving of commands sets the subordinate thinking how best to carry them out. Similarly, divine revelation merely shows the way and leaves to the human intellect the task of performing the journey. The word of God comes as a spur to thought and inquiry as the religious history of Islam shows. It was the Quran which set the Arabs on the road to scientific investigation.

To every man, therefore, who thinks deeply and consistently, it will become clear that belief in divine revelation is an integral part of belief in the divine Being. Those who profess to believe in the Creator and yet deny the possibility or necessity of revelation stand on the same ground with those who deny it altogether. For such people God exists such as the Sun exists, having no part or lot in human affairs, owing no authority, claiming no allegiance, deserving no obedience. The Sun indeed is in a much better position than its Creator, for it has a vital function to discharge in supplying warmth and sunshine to the earth without which it could not support life. But God having created the world has no other function to perform now. He merely sets the machine going for the benefit of the rationalist and is indifferent to its operations. He is, therefore, a functionless being and, since function is

"Life itself," while to cease functioning is to cease living; the God of the rationalist is as dead as the dodo.

To believe in God is, therefore, to believe in His Sovereignty, for how is He related to us expect as Sovereign to whom all obedience is due and as the supreme authority having a title to allegiance superior to that which we owe to human authorities? That is the reason why the Quran lays so much stress on the Sovereignty of God.

> Say O Allah! Owner of Sovereignty. Thou givest authority unto whom Thou wilt, and Thou withdrawest authority from whom Thou wilt. (Qur'an-3:26)

> Unto Allah belongeth the Sovereignty of the heavens and the earth and whatsoever is therein, and He is able to do all things. (Qur'an-5:120)

> The decision is for Allah only, He telleth the truth and He is the Best of Deciders. (Qur'an-6:57)

As sovereign, God alone is to be obeyed. To Him alone is submission due and only His guidance is to be followed. A man who professes to believe in Him worships Him in the temple, the mosque or the church, yet, refusing to submit to His will as manifested in His revelation, accepts the guidance of kings, philosophers, religious divines and political leaders or the various legislative bodies set up by people, is as much of a disbeliever as an atheist or a communist, whatever theoretical justification he may bring forward for this rebellious attitude towards his sovereign. In practice there is no difference between such a man and those who openly rebel against God. Both follow their own self-interest or the interest of their party, group or nation. Both are guided by their whims and fancies and both are worshippers of their instincts and desires. This

does not mean that a believer should be an anarchist and refuse obedience to all human authority. What is implied in acceptance of divine sovereignty is that obedience to the powers that can be rendered only in so far as their commands and legislative enactments conform to the principles embodied in the divine revelation and derive their sanction there from.

The concept of sovereignty has been the plaything of political theorists and ambitious careerists ever since the rise of the modern state, and much thought and labour has been devoted to applying it to human authorities like kings, dictators, parliaments and peoples, although it must be clear to everyone who analyses the concept fully and pursues the analysis to its logical conclusion, that none of the above agencies possess the attributes of sovereignty has been defined by Bedin as "supreme power over citizens and subjects unrestrained by law." As explained by Sabine, "its primary attribute is the power to give laws to citizens collectively and severally without the consent of a superior." Now, in this sense no human authority, whether king, dictator or parliament, can be regarded sovereign, for the consent of citizens, either active or passive, is the foundation of all authority without which it would be impossible to secure its maintenance. It is difficult to conceive of a human authority which can maintain itself for long without enlisting in some measure, however small, the support and consent of at least a considerable section of those over whom it rules. Again, sovereignty must be, as Bedin himself admitted, extra-legal, in other words, it must be unrestrained by law, custom or tradition. Now what king, dictator or parliament can legislate against the expressed wishes of its subjects or inaugurate a

complete breach with past traditions? The most powerful authority has to respect the common sentiments of the people concerned and the customs rooted in their past history. In the fact of these objections, the sovereignty of states, parliaments, kings and dictators becomes a pale shadow of its real self.

The notion that the people themselves are the ultimate sovereign is even more ill-grounded and it was the difficulties inherent in the conception of the people's sovereignty that led Bedin and his successors in the political philosophy to make a distinction between legal sovereignty and the ultimate general sovereignty. The term 'people', considered rightly, does not denote a unity. If the will of the people is to have reality, it must be unanimous, but such unanimity has never been and will never be attained in practice. That is why from Rousseau downwards, political theorists have wrestled in vain to identify the general will or the people's will with the will of all. After an unsuccessful effort to explain away the difference between the general will or the people's will and the will of all, Rousseau had to admit reluctantly that the general will is not synonymous with the will of all. He tried to escape from the difficulty by asserting that those who differed from the general will or the will of the people did so because they were ignorant of their own real interest, which had they but known, they would have willed in the same way as prescribed by the general will. The argument, however, is not convincing and it is clear that what we mean by people's sovereignty is the sovereignty of the effective section of them. There is, among all peoples, always a particular group or party which either, because of its intellectual predominance, superiority in wealth and

material means or because of the religious veneration it inspires in the common mind, comes to be accepted as the people. It is this minority which moulds public opinion, sets the moral standards of the society and succeeds in getting itself recognized as the true mirror of the people's thoughts and desire. "The characteristic of social life is the unthinking obedience of the many to the will of the few", says Laski. It is the will of the few, therefore, that really counts in the life of a nation and even the few predominate not by sheer force and power but on the basis of some compromise with the desires and needs of the common man so that their power, for all its effectiveness, is never supreme or unrestrained. Sovereignty in its full sense cannot be said to belong to this predominant minority, since its real test is unlimited and unrestrained power over the subjects. He who cannot make his will effective or, on making it effective, has to accept compromises forced on him by the necessities of the situation, is not sovereign in the real sense of the word, because his power is still limited. Now consider the most powerful state on earth, without equal or rival in military strength and economic resources. Is such a state powerful enough to act in defiance of its own people internally or pursue its policies externally without let or hindrance from other states and without regard to their interests? If it tries to do so, internally it will provoke rebellion among its subjects; externally it will bring on war with consequences it is unable to foresee. In the event of war, even if it is victorious over its antagonists, can it go on to rule over the subjugated people without dependence on the willing support of some element in the population of the conquered subjects? The reply must be in the negative and

establishes our contention that no human authority can lay claim to sovereignty because man, both in the individual and in the collective sphere, suffers from limitations and has to seek the help and support of others. It is only a self-sufficient, all-powerful being that sovereignty can be postulated. Such a being, possessed of supreme power, must exist, since a world without a sovereign is as inconceivable as an army without a general. The true sovereign is, therefore, God.

The concept of sovereignty carries along with it the idea of an authority constituting the final arbiter in all matters of dispute. The true sovereign must also be the judge to whom people may take back all their grievance, when they are unable to obtain justice at the hands of subordinate authorities. The highest and the most impartial tribunal sometimes fails to satisfy the parties to a dispute because such judgment as it gives, lacks the finality and infallibility requisite for a just settlement. Perfect judgment cannot be expected of any man or body of men, as it implies perfect knowledge and infallibility, and, in the absence of such judgment, one always feels the sense of wrong underdressed, though one may acquiesce in it through sheer physical powerlessness and the impossibility of obtaining a better judgment. The judgment of human authorities always gives the impression that it can be improved upon and leaves the scope for further adjudication. This is inevitable because a perfect judgment is only possible with knowledge of the inner motives that lead to action, and inner motives are inaccessible to human brain which can but remotely guess them. Thus the need of a greater judge, above all human judges, remains a very real need and it is only

in God, who is the real sovereign, that we can also discern the true judge and arbiter, for He alone, of all things that exist, possesses that infallibility of judgment combined with it the assurance that His decision will be free of all error and even of the possibility of error.

We have explained the reasons which lead us to believe in the sovereignty of God. It is but natural and reasonable that the Creator should be the sovereign and possess a title to obedience higher than that of every other authority. It cannot be that God created the world only to find His authority appropriated and usurped by others. Would it not be sheer ingratitude on our part if we obey powers other than Him, when everything that we possess, body, mind, intelligence, feeling, emotion and all qualities that makes existence worth-while, we owe to His creative power? Not that He stands in need of our acceptance and submission in the slightest degree. His sovereignty would be no less real and complete even if we all denied and rebelled against Him. He is not dependent on us for His power and glory. It is we who depend on Him for His power and glory. It is we who depend on Him for every breath of our life. He claims our obedience, not because He needs it but because we need Him and without obedience of His commands, our moral and material progress would come to a standstill. It is in our own interests and as a matter of gratitude for the manifold boons He has bestowed on us that we should turn to Him and submit to His will. As for His sovereignty, whether we accept it or not, it is supreme over the whole kingdom of existence, animate and inanimate. Every object of nature, every element of the universe, all that lives and breathes on earth has to bow

down in submission to Him voluntarily or involuntarily.

> "Seek thee other than the religion of Allah?
>
> When unto Him submiteth whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly and unto Him they will be returned" (Qur'an-3:83)

The whole complex machinery of the universe, from the heavenly bodies down to the world of plants and animals, moves to His call and cannot deviate even in the slightest degree from the course appointed for it by the Creator. Over the whole physical world His fiat runs supreme. The laws He has laid down for the inanimate world, for plants and animals, are implicitly followed and unservingly observed by them. The earth cannot revolve in any other orbit than that fixed by its maker; the seed cannot grow, take shape and bear fruit in any other manner save that which is divinely ordained; man cannot but work within the limitations set upon him by his Creator. His birth and circumstance, his inborn qualities and natural disposition mark out a career and a destiny which he cannot avoid following:-

> "It is not for the sun to overtake the moon nor doth the night our-strip the day. They float on each in an orbit."
>
> (Qur'an-36:40)

The sovereignty of God is, therefore, absolute and perfect, irrespective of whether we acknowledge it, submit to it or break our shins against it. How does then the question of our obedience come in, when obey we do by an unforced obedience? The question arises, because, of all his creatures, He has invested man with a measure of freedom and left him at liberty within a certain sphere to go the way he likes. In so far as man

belongs to the domain of physics and biology, his actions are determined for him and he cannot do otherwise than follow the law of his nature like all the rest of living and non-living things. Within this sphere he possesses no freedom and has no power to go against the will of his Creator; voluntarily or involuntarily he is obedient to God. He must breathe, he must eat, he must sleep, he must grow to manhood and then pass into old age, he must reproduce, he must associate with his fellow-men in social life, he must love and he must hate. But there is a sphere also within which man is free to follow the path of obedience or of disobedience, of virtue or sin, of loyalty to his Maker or of rebellion against Him. This is the realm of intellect and morality in which man exercises his will and takes, by his own choice, a line of thought and action in the various spheres of his life, including those of politics and economics. No compulsion is exercised by the Creator in this sphere. He merely gives His commands and directions and waits to see whether man carries them out. He sends His emissaries with principles of conduct for the guidance of mankind and then leaves it free to accept or reject them, to follow or ignore them in practical life. You may be honest or dishonest, as you please, in your dealings with other men; you may keep conjugal faith or go on to commit adultery; you may spent your wealth in self-indulgence and luxurious living or use it to help your kinsmen, neighbours and needy fellow citizens; you may exploit the labouring masses in the name of capitalism or shoot down your opponents mercilessly in the name of communism; your freedom in all these respects is unrestrained. Instantaneous punishment is not visited upon you if you go wrong or misbehave, for God is

infinitely patient. He has given the individual a full lifetime and the group a yet longer period extending over centuries, to see the error and turn to the right course. The consequences of human action have been put off to another term.

> "if Allah took mankind to task by that which they deserve, He would not leave a living creature on the surface of the earth; but he reprieveth them another term and when their term cometh then verily (they will know that) Allah is ever seer of His servants."
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> (Qur'an-35:45)

Not that he can escape ultimate punishment for his misdeeds, but immediately no harm comes, because he is on trial and so long as the period of trial lasts, he will not be taken to task for anything he may do.

When we insist on the sovereignty of God, we mean that man should acknowledge His sovereignty and submit to His will in this sphere, the sphere of moral, social, political and economic activity, within which he is free to choose his forms of conduct and follow the path of submission or of disobedience. When we acknowledge the sovereignty of God, no other way is open to us except the way of submission to Him and of obedience to His commands, which implies of necessity that we should disabuse our minds of the sovereignty of kings, dictators, parliaments and state, obeying them only in so far as they themselves obey God, the real sovereign. To acknowledge the sovereignty of God is therefore, to admit that we are answerable to Him in the last resort. We cease to regard ourselves as independent beings uncontrolled by any authority except that which we ourselves set up and unrestrained by any discipline save that imposed

by the state or society. Rather, we conceive of our powers, physical, intellectual and moral, as delegated by the Maker for certain specific purpose stand by Him and to be used only in furtherance of those objects in the manner prescribed by Him. We surrender also our freedom to legislate for ourselves and promise, henceforth, to take His commands as the basis of our law and custom. It is only when this sense of responsibility to God pervades the entire realm of conduct, political and economic as well as social, and deters us from acting or legislating in any way which we know would cause His displeasure, that we really and truly believe in Him.

It is because men ceased to acknowledge the sovereignty of God, that they were enslaved by the totalitarian states and by dictators like Mussolini, Hitler and Stalin, losing all freedom, initiative and individuality. Imagine a society of Mussolini's conception summed up in his famous words, "everything for the state, nothing against the state, nothing outside the state." Could freedom and individuality survive in a state of the type adumbrated by Mussolini? Would it have been possible for a people worshipping God and owing allegiance to His commands, as set forth in His revelation, to fall down helplessly and passively without a struggle before such barefaced tyranny.

The democratic states of Western Europe were no better in this respect. There the sovereignty of individual caprice was substituted for the sovereignty of God. Having refused to bow before the Almighty state, the peoples of the democratic states fell prostrate before there won individual selfish desires and personal likes and dislikes, inaugurating a reign of

lawlessness in morals in which every man followed his own standards of rectitude. The moral chaos resulting under these conditions inevitably provoked a violent reaction against democracy in the form of totalitarianism. The freedom accorded to the individual by the democratic state was highly dangerous, as it left each person at the mercy of his own untutored instincts and impulses, a guide unto himself. Moral positions were made and unmade as the need of the moment required. In the absence of a recognized moral criterion, each man found himself like a ship without compass and rudder on an uncharted moral criterion, without goal or direction, blown hither and thither by the winds and waves of circumstance. This was the very negation of true liberty, which can flourish only in a society where the individual accepts the necessity of self-restraint in obedience to moral law. Individuality cannot develop without discipline and subjugation of the lower self in the interests of the higher self. A society lacks the conditions necessary for the growth of personality, in which the individual brooks no discipline and freely follows the bent of his nature, giving way without restraint to the call of his instincts and desires or to the dictates of his feeble intellect. The development of individuality calls for a life of self-restraint in which human desires, passions and instincts are regulated by a law springing from the depths of being and not imposed from without. In accepting God and following His will in preference to our own will or the will of an external authority such as the state, the parliament or the dictator, we submit to a discipline and authority which is not external to us, for God is our own ideal self; our self stripped of all its defects and freed of all its limitations. If men

had acknowledged Him as their sovereign, instead of regarding Him as a retired pensioner without an active role in the universe of His own creation, if they had taken His will as the standard and form of social conduct, they would have found a discipline in which their essential freedom and individuality was safe from outside encroachment for divine law does not restrict human freedom except where such restriction becomes absolutely essential to keep man within the bounds of reason and moderation. The following paragraph from David De Santillan's article, "Law and Society", (Legacy of Islam) will give the reader an idea of the nature and objective of divine law: "The Qur'anic revelation styles itself a law of liberty, an act of mercy vouchsafed by God to mankind, in order to soften the rigidity of the preceding revelation. Islam is a reversion to natural law, the primitive faith of the patriarchs (Noah or Abraham) which had been corrupted and adulterated by Jews and Christians. The new law suppresses the austerities and the numerous interdictions imposed upon the Jews by the Mosaic law, abolishes the macerations of Christianity, and declares its willingness to comply with the weakness and frailty of man and the practical necessities of life. "Ease the way, do not make it tougher", such were the instructions usually imparted by the Prophet (pbuh) to his missi dominici "Allah lays upon each man only what he can fulfil". Islam has a tendency towards mysticism but not towards ascetism. If formally disapproves of the exaggerations of austerity, which weaken the body and suppress the natural instincts of man. It exhorts the believer to enjoy the good things granted by God, provided he observes due measure and obeys the

precepts, not numerous in themselves nor very strict, of the Qur'anic revelation."

Even under the modern secular state, in an age of receding faith, there are men who believe in God and continue according to their lights to serve and obey Him. They do not, however, realize the full implications of religious faith, nor do they really understand what belief in the sovereignty of God requires of them. Most of them are satisfied if they observe their prayers regularly, perform a few religious ceremonies and act charitably towards their family, their kinsmen and their fellow citizens, the insufficiency of this restricted faith will dawn upon them when the implications of divine sovereignty are set forth plainly before them. Those who acknowledge the sovereignty of god should also accept the supremacy of divine law in all spheres of life, for the sovereignty of God extends to and over-shadows the total personality of man and not merely one aspect of it. Acceptance of God, therefore, means total surrender of Him in all spheres of life, without a single reservation. You cannot say to Him, if you really and truly believe in Him, "We accept thy guidance and promise to obey thee in private life, but in matters which concern politics, economics, national and international politics, we reserve our freedom to follow our politicians, economists and financial experts. "such a reservation He would not stand, for He claims your undivided allegiance and brooks no association in His authority. The believer in God owns only one sovereign, whether it be in private life, public affairs or economic matters. He cannot cut up his personality and life into scattered, isolated fragments, each pulling in a different direction. His standard of judgment and

basic outlook for all fields of conduct is one and he should be prepared to accept divine guidance in all his affairs and relationships, subordinating his taste, judgment and reason to the commands of his sovereign. In other words, he should touch the Creator with his full being and not merely at the tangent of his soul. Those who differentiate between spiritual and wordly affairs, thinking that the latter lie outside the purview of God, are merely deceiving themselves. Considered rightly, the entire realm of human conduct comes within the domain of the spiritual. If you believe in God and carry out His purposes, your eating, drinking and marrying is just as much of a virtue as your praying and almsgiving. It is not for man to put restrictions on the sovereignty of his Maker, saying to Him in effect: "thus far we shall obey thee but not farther." Those who behave in this manner are really as good disbelievers as the atheist and the communist. The capitalist will not be forgiven or treated as worshipper of God, merely because he attends the Church or the mosque, since he is a rebel against the authority of God in all economic and political matters, following the interests of his class and party and rejecting the claims of divine revelation to regulate his conduct in these spheres. Absolute, unreserved and total surrender is what the Divine Being requires of the believers as the price of His pleasure. No sovereign can claim less, if he is sovereign at all.

To believe in God implies, again, submission to Him all the twenty four hours of the day and night and obedience to His law throughout the whole of life, all days, all weeks and all years included. Worshipping Him five times a day and ignoring his commands all the rest of the day, believing in Him on Sundays and

denying him in practice throughout the remaining of the week in not belief but persistent denial and disobedience.

Acknowledgement of His sovereignty similarly means refusal to accord the right of legislation, be it in political, economic and social affairs, to any legislative body, representative or unrepresentative, to any King, dictator or parliament, unless such legislation is based upon and derived from the divine law and satisfies the standards prescribed by that law. To owe allegiance to God is to refuse allegiance to every other authority unless the latter acts as His servant and upholds the authority of His law. This makes an end of all nationalism, of all totalitarianism, whether of the communist or of the fascist type, and of all hero-worship and unthinking obedience to national leadership, family traditions and local customs, if a person believes in God, not half heartedly as we do now, but with the full strength of his soul and tries to mould himself in accordance with the practical requirements of that belief, he will find, as things go now, that the whole world has turned against him. He will meet opposition not merely from disbelievers, but also from those who style themselves believers, because ever since the advent of the modern secular state, there has been a complete severance between belief and practice. Belief in God has come to mean belief in a certain meta-physical theory and the way in which they are solved. You will not find these days the slightest difference in practice and conduct between an atheist and a believer or a believer and an agnostic. Both can pull on together and direct the affairs of the modern state in perfect harmony without the least possibility of a clash, as if the doctrine of one God was

thing of no consequence to the practical conduct of human affairs and, for mankind at large, it mattered little whether God really exists of His existence is a mere theory not to be taken seriously. It has naturally become impossible for any man to live up to the principles of his religious faith or to endeavour to redirect the flow of human affairs in accordance with those principles of his religious faith or to endeavour to redirect the flow of human affairs in accordance with those principles. He must be content to practice his faith only in so far as it is tolerated by the secular state, to acknowledge the sovereignty of God in theory, and in practice, to take the state, the parliament or the dictator as his sovereign.

The decay of religious faith and its ineffectiveness in the practical conduct of collective affairs, is directly attributable to the present leadership of mankind which has fallen into the hands of disbelievers who deny God either openly and reject His guidance or, maintaining a show of belief, take ever precaution that God and His commands shall not touch them or their followers at any point of their lives in the social, political or economic field, in order that their freedom to pursue their Machiavellian faith and its principles may not be tampered with. Those who believe in God are either so silly that do not understand how they have been tricked into practical disbelief by their Machiavellian leaders, or their faith in Him as been so shaken that they are ready to give themselves away to any theory or dogma that may happen to hold the field for the moment rather than risk their neck by upholding the sovereignty of God in a sea of godlessness. Meanwhile the believers have decided that they would sheepishly follow the unrighteous lead of disbelieving thinkers,

politicians, statesmen and rulers instead of making an earnest endeavour to take the reins of power in their own hands, in order to make their religious faith a reality to be reckoned with, rather than a plausible theory to be ignored by the believer and scoffed at by the impious.

During the Peace Conference in Paris, following the first World war, Clemenceau, leader and Prime Minister of France and one of the most powerful statesmen of Europe, annoyed at President Wilson's assertion that the war had been fought to make the world safe for democracy, sarcastically remarked that the President was talking like Jesus Christ. On another occasion he is reported to have said that President Wilson, with his fourteen points, was worse than Almighty God. To such men as these, had been entrusted the guidance of peoples and nations. Is it any wonder that they filled the whole world with misery, poverty and the wasting disease of immorality? In any truly Christian society, a man who held that Christ was a visionary idealist and who was guilty of such gross disrespect towards the author of his own being would have been bundled out ignominiously and made to bite the dust. The people of France, who included millions of devout Christians, not only made no protest against this shameful blasphemy, but suffered Clemenceau to continue in undisputed possession of his authority and worshipped him as a hero and a savior. The statesman of other nations who came to the Peace Conference were men of the same mould. If they did not openly flout the principles of Jesus Christ, they had at least no belief in them and at best regarded them as sacred relics of a buygone age. Such were the men who had been called to the task of hammering out a just and

durable peace that would ensure justice and fair play to the weaker nations of the earth. The results are before us in all its hideousness. Three and a half million people died of famine in Bengal, a yet larger number of human beings are facing disease and starvation at the present moment both in Asia and Europe. The war itself has cost many millions more. The material losses suffered are even greater, Europe from one end to another is a continent of wrecked cities and ruined country. So is Japan. The sum of human sufferings produced by this war alone exceeds a thousand times the misery and privation caused by all the religious wars of history put together. The fanaticism of national communities, their blind worship of scheming politicians, and the subjection of collective life to the play of irrational impulse has never gone farther than in this age of enlightenment. If there are still men who believe that scientific progress, control of natural forces and the genius for organization displayed by the modern age can save us, without a corresponding progress in morality and in the self restraint which comes of belief in God and in the hereafter, then the future of humanity is dark indeed. One thing however, stands clear; that the secular state has shown itself so incompetent, so destructive of all that is great and good in human affairs that it cannot be suffered too long without bringing mankind face to face with utter ruin. The secular leadership of mankind has been completely discredited. Let it call as many conferences. National and international, as it will; let it proclaim charter after charter, signed and unsigned, guaranteeing the fundamental liberties of mankind; let it reform capitalism or remodel the state on the basis of communism, it will never succeed, not even in a

thousand years, in putting the house of humanity in order. Secularism has had its day. It was tried and found wanting. With such great scientific power and such immense material resources at its command, it could do nothing but create havoc and make the confusion of the world worse confounded.

And yet it would be pure phantasy to imagine that because the present leadership has failed to satisfy the spiritual and material needs of the common man, it would relinquish power of its own accord and slip away from the stage like a faded dream, unless it meets the challenge of an alternative leadership at once more competent and more responsive to the demand for social justice. The task, then is to organize the masses in a new form of organization, pledged to the establishment of divine sovereignty and the restoration of human equality, in a world torn asunder by the clash of nations and conflict of classes. Such a movement will succeed, if it has shown itself to be above all class hatreds and national prejudices, if the idea of one sovereign god and allegiance to His revelation seizes upon the minds of its leaders with a force powerful enough to destroy all loyalty to national, sectional and class interests.

Let us be warned, however, against a repetition of the Episcopal rule such as in the dark Middle Ages. Let there be no talk again of the temporal and the spiritual, of the priest and the layman. The temporal is but an aspect of the spiritual and not a separate category by itself. Every believer is a priest responsible to God. Priesthood as an institution lends itself to frightful perversions. We do not want men who expoit religion to satiate their lust for power and who make a show of piety in order to hoax their

fellowmen into submission. The leadership of mankind cannot be entrusted to these traders in religion. Such people ought to be suppressed so effectively that they many never again raise their heads or prostitute religion for worldly ends. The new politico-religious leadership should be based on a highly disciplined party of the righteous and the believing who dread the responsibility of power except in so far as power and authority can be turned into an instrument of moral and spiritual ends. In a word, we want men who would transform the state into an agency of spiritual instruction and moral education, men who combine deep faith and great piety with knowledge of the world that would put to shame the unregenerate materialists who misguide the destinies of mankind.